

ALMHOUSE REPORT

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, February 21, 1974

(From the 1902 Report of Almhouse Committee.)

Your Committee to investigate the management of the Almhouse and advise regarding the expediency of closing it and boarding out the inmates, beg to submit the following report:

It was found that while the expenses per inmate for the year 1900 were slightly in excess of expenses for previous years, yet taking Mr. Peterson's two years of administration, the expenses were less than usual. The excess in 1900 is explained partly by some of last year's bills being charged to the year, and partly by repairs and improvements which have only an indirect bearing on the "Support of Poor" account.

That Mr. Peterson's two years have cost the town less than any previous two years, must be sufficient refutation to the charge that he had entertained a good deal of company at the town's expense, and if he has had company at his own, there can be nothing to criticise.

But your committee feel that in view of the depressing occupation of caring for old and infirm people, the citizens of the town do not object to an almhouse keeper having company if the privilege is not abused.

The charge was made that Mr. Peterson made money by working outside, when his time belonged to the town.

This point might be well taken if it could be proved that the Almhouse suffered in consequence, but no evidence of neglect was found, and neither is there any town ordinance forbidding Almhouse Keepers from employing idle time to their own profit and advantage.

Your committee suggest in view of this complaint, that if the Almhouse Keeper has much idle time, it might be well to try the experiment of making our Town Farm largely self-supporting. This could be done by running a hen farm, for which there are splendid opportunities. Should we try it, and succeed, we should be solving one of the problems of the age.

In the matter of the tramp who, it was claimed, was employed on the Town Farm, to the exclusion of some needy townsman, it appears that Mr. Peterson finding the tramp nuisance increasing, and acting on advice, hired a tramp for board and lodging, whose special duty it was to look after the tramps. By this means all tramps were safely under lock and key every night; the town's hospitality was made less attractive, and tramp attendance fell off. This tramp was honest and industrious, and more than paid for his board. Tramps must be regarded as a menace in a scattered and rural community, and in view of the herds of them that have been visiting Duxbury for the past 7 years, it is time some action was taken leading to their exclusion.

It is possible that to enforce the vagrant law might prove too expensive. Statistics show that the hospitality of misguided sentimentalists has much to do with the influx of tramps, and one remedy suggested by the State authorities is, that every householder be notified by the Board of Selectmen, that he or she must absolutely refuse aid of any kind to vagrants, and must refer them all to their Board. Your committee urge the adoption of this plan.

ALMHOUSE BURNS

A Duxbury news dispatch of Dec. 8, 1895:

"The almhouse was burned on Sunday night. About 12:30 o'clock fire was discovered in a portion of the building used for a workshop and a tramp room, neither being accupied at that time. What wind there was blew the flames toward the main building, and as there is no fire department or apparatus here it was soon burning throughout. There were 6 inmates, who were all gotten out safely. Nothing on the upper floors was saved, but a portion of the furniture on the lower floor was taken out. Hand extinguishers, such as are now being put in factories in Plymouth and neighboring towns, saved the barn and other buildings. A quantity of supplies of the school committee and some of the selectmen's documents and books were burned. How the fire started is unknown. The building was a large wooden structure situated not far from South Duxbury railroad station and it was built many years ago.

(The remodelled building is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Leo Daley of Depot St.--Ed.)